

## [Highway 30](#) by [Luddleston](#)

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**Summary:**

Kaidan's car breaks down in the middle of nowhere, during a rainstorm, and he's locked out on top of it all.

James is a sweet tow truck driver who lends this poor, soaking wet dude a hoodie for the drive to the nearest mechanic.

## Highway 30

### Author's Note:

MY CAR IS SO SHITTY YOU GUYS. The ignition broke and I live in the middle of nowhere!

So I calmed myself while waiting for the tow truck by writing this <3

Always put your frustrating life situations on fictional characters. It works.

Kaidan's car was *fucked*.

He wasn't the kind of person to use that sort of language lightly, either, but this was bad. Hood smoking, engine making horrendous sounds, the whole shebang. And, stupidly, when he rushed out to check under the hood, he locked his keys inside.

That's how Kaidan found himself leaning against the side of his Honda Civic with his hands tucked in his pockets, taking deep breaths and trying *desperately* not to let this turn into a full-blown panic attack. *Breathe slower*, he told himself, *you still have your phone. Call a tow truck*.

Thankfully, even though he was in the middle of a mostly-deserted highway, he was able to get enough of a signal to look up and call a tow from the next town over. Good thing he got ahold of someone, too, because just as he hung up, he heard a crash of thunder in the distance. "Please don't rain," he muttered uselessly at the sky.

The sky did not listen to Kaidan's request, and minutes later, it was pouring down rain. Kaidan was pretty sure he'd gone from "a little road-weary, but fine" to "drowned cat," appearance-wise.

Any minute now. The guy on the phone had told him the truck would be there to pick him up any minute now. He couldn't take his phone out of his pocket to check the time, for risk of it getting wet. He only needed one

piece of technology dying on him today. So, he had no idea how long it was before he saw a row of yellow headlights in the distance, enough of them that it had to be a tow truck, and he took a step away from his car, pushing his wet hair off his forehead.

Thank *god*.

The tow truck pulled up in front of Kaidan's car and stopped, and Kaidan saw the window roll down. He walked up alongside the truck, shielding his eyes from the rain with one hand. "Hey," he said, watching the driver glance over at him. The guy had a couple scars on his face, one that bisected his lips, and the dark hair, dark eyes thing he had going on would've had Kaidan flirting if he didn't look absolutely horrible at the moment.

"Hey, man. You could've waited in your car," he said, and Kaidan rolled his eyes.

"I locked my keys inside," he said.

The driver gave him a look that was half-sympathy, half-amusement. "Alright. I'm gonna hook you up to my truck. Hop in, and, uh, try not to drip all over? If you can?"

Kaidan did try, but the inside of the cab didn't reflect that. His wet T-shirt left a soaking spot on the back of the seat, and even though his jeans had remained relatively dry on the backs, they were still sticking to him and chafing awfully. He was also kind of tempted to toe off his shoes.

The AC was on in the truck, and Kaidan was shivering a little by the time the driver hopped back in and slammed the door shut. "Hey, man, do you wanna like... I have a hoodie in the back. Might help with the cold."

"Thanks," Kaidan said, sniffing involuntarily. His nose was starting to run from the chill. "I'm Kaidan, by the way."

"Yeah, you said on the phone," said the driver, "I'm James." He had a little bit of an accent, but Kaidan couldn't totally place it. James reached around

to yank a navy blue hoodie out of the backseat, and he sat it on the center console while Kaidan stripped off his soaking T-shirt. He was a little surprised to notice James's eyes on him while he did it.

Once he had the hoodie on, he slicked his wet hair out of his face and James gave him a little half-grin. "Where to, man?" he asked, cranking the heat up.

Kaidan rattled off the address of the auto shop he wanted his car taken to, and James shifted the tow truck into gear and merged back onto the highway.

It was about a twenty-minute drive to the auto shop, and when they finally reached it, Kaidan's sense of panic was starting to fade, and he could feel his pulse going back to normal. The rain was slowing down, too, and even though Kaidan's jeans were still damp, he felt a little drier and a lot warmer.

He shrugged out of James's hoodie and handed it back, struggling back into his still-damp T-shirt, and James wished him good luck with his car troubles.

"I'm gonna need it," Kaidan said, and when James shook his hand, it was pleasantly warm.

He watched the tow truck disappear into the cloudy horizon, and the cold started seeping back into his wet clothes.

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Kaidan was back at his house a few days later, car repaired, when he got a call from a number he didn't recognize. Normally, he passed those calls by, but he was bored and trying to procrastinate his work, so he picked up, switching his phone to speaker.

"Hey, um. This is super unprofessional and I shouldn't be calling you, but. I just..."

Kaidan looked down at his phone, wondering if someone perhaps had a wrong number. “Who’s this?”

“Oh, shit! I forgot to say, um. This is James. I drive a tow truck? You called me like, three days ago.”

“Yeah, I remember,” Kaidan said, resting a hand on his chest and wondering why his heart was pounding. “Um, is something wrong with my info or something?”

“No, I. I’m just calling because I wanted to... uh...” his voice was muffled like he was leaning his head away from the phone. “Jesúcristo, this is awkward. I wanted to ask you on a date.”

“You what?”

“Shit, man, you’re gonna make me repeat it?”

“No, no, I heard you, I just. James, if I didn’t think you were so cute, this would be really creepy of you.”

“Well. Thank fuck you think I’m cute,” James said, and Kaidan could hear a smile in his voice.

“You got lucky,” Kaidan said.

James laughed, a breathy, giddy sound. “So. How about dinner and drinks on Friday?”

“I like that idea.” Kaidan was grinning ridiculously, and James laughed again before bidding him goodbye and hanging up the phone.

“Oh my god,” Kaidan mumbled to himself, thumbing through his phone until he reached his ongoing conversation with Ashley. “*I have a date,*” he sent her, “*what the actual hell?*”

“*omg K, tell me what you’re wearing,*” Ashley said, and Kaidan just rolled his eyes. He probably shouldn’t have immediately gotten ahold of Ashley. At least it meant she was happy for him. And probably that she was going

through a mental list of shoes Kaidan owned and what exactly they matched with.

Friday couldn't come faster.

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The start of the weekend found Kaidan in a cozy, kind of hipster restaurant which had been apparently suggested by James's best friend, according to the texts they'd been sending back and forth. He was wearing a dark gray button-down and a pair of jeans that had all been Ashley-approved, and he had his sleeves rolled up to the thickest part of his forearms, a couple buttons undone at his neckline. He looked damn good, especially compared to the hot mess he'd been when he first met James.

And this time, he had his keys in his pocket, not locked inside his car.

He checked his watch again, waiting for James to show. Sure, he'd arrived a few minutes early, but for Kaidan, that was just first-date protocol.

After a minute or so, James showed up wearing a black T-shirt that was tight enough to show off his biceps and, *damn*, his pecs. The V-neck of it was wide enough that Kaidan could see the geometric lines of a tattoo he had that trailed down his neck and, from the look of things, over his shoulder.

James was unbelievably charming. He made clever small-talk with the waitress, and took the seat next to Kaidan instead of the one across from him, close enough that his knee bumped Kaidan's under the table. He bought Kaidan a glass of his favorite beer, which was pretty damn fantastic (and Kaidan was picky about beer), and was, overall, a perfect gentleman. "My Mamá raised a good man," he said, when Kaidan asked him about it.

Kaidan was a little reluctant to leave the restaurant, because he knew he was heading back to his own apartment, sans James.

At the end of the meal, after James ordered a cookie dough custard sundae and Kaidan ate a few bites but then decided it was too saccharine for him,

Kaidan laid his hand over James's on the table. It only took a few seconds for James to smile and turn his palm up.

Kaidan liked this—holding hands across a table at a little bistro, James's knee bumping his, a jazz band playing in the background.

He was a little glad his car had been acting up.

James walked him out the front door after dinner, paused with him for a few minutes under the series of Edison bulbs hanging out the front of the restaurant. James had a warm hand in the center of Kaidan's back. "This was really fun," James said, and even though Kaidan knew it was the most typical-first-date thing *ever* to say, it sounded earnest from James. "I'm glad you gave me a chance."

Kaidan hesitated for a moment, on the edge of saying something but unsure of what it should be. Instead, he kissed James, soft and warm and a little bit perfect. James was smiling against Kaidan's lips, barely even kissing back, but his arm was looped securely around Kaidan's waist and his hand was solid on Kaidan's neck.

It was only a few moments before the door clicked open and they broke apart, stepping to the side to let a group of college students all sporting identical half-shaved haircuts pass them by.

"I'll see you, then," Kaidan said. He still had his hand on James's hip.

"Yeah," James said, "You should text me. Or call me. Or whatever." He kissed Kaidan one more time, said, "goodnight," and they went to opposite ends of the (admittedly tiny) parking lot.

Kaidan shut the car door behind him, and let out a slow breath before turning his key in the ignition.

His car wouldn't start.

Shit.

He hauled himself up and walked across the parking lot, tangible relief flowing through him when he realized James's jeep was still in the parking lot. He didn't look anywhere near backing out; Kaidan could see his phone screen lighting up his face. "Hey," he said sheepishly, knocking on the window.

James jumped adorably before realizing it was Kaidan and then he opened the door. "Hey! What's up?"

"Um. My car. It's not starting, I just. Uh," Kaidan began, and James just laughed.

"Dude! Your car is kind of a piece of shit!"

"You're telling me."

"C'mere," James said, pulling him bodily forward, until Kaidan had one hand on the steering wheel to steady himself, the other on James's shoulder, and his lips on James's.

For a wild moment, he didn't care if his old Civic ever turned on again.

### **Author's Note:**

No, my tow truck driver was not James Vega, yes, my car is fixed now.

If you want to talk about what I would have done if James Vega was picking up my car, visit me on the tumbls @weezna

BTW the restaurant they go to is real, and if you live anywhere near Gas City, IN, you should go. It's called Payne's. It's a gift.